



## Overview of the Committee

The Security Council is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring international peace and averting conflict. Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations states that “in order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” The Security Council is comprised of 15 members: the five permanent members (the victors of World War II), China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. Each council member has one vote. However, the permanent five members listed above have what is called “veto power”, which means that either China, France, Russia, the U.K., or the U.S. can block any substantive decision of the Security Council with a “veto” vote.

While other UN subsidiary organs make recommendations to governments, the Security Council alone has the power to make decisions that member states are obligated to comply with under the Charter of the United Nations. When a conflict emerges, it is the foremost concern of the Security Council to bring the violence to an end as soon as possible. In order to achieve this, the Security Council has on many occasions issued cease-fire directives that have greatly contributed to the de-escalation of violence. The Security Council is also responsible for reducing tensions and creating conditions of peace. To this effect, the Security Council may decide to undertake enforcement measures, economic sanctions (as we will discuss) or collective military action.



## **Topic 1: Open Agenda**

Security Council Delegates will determine the agenda and the topic to be discussed on the day of the conference. This topic shall be a current crisis at the time. It is therefore advised that each delegate be familiar with current events and crises around the world.

You will NOT have to write a Position Paper on this topic. This means you will only hand in one Position Paper on “Sanctions as a means of Coercion”.

## **Topic 2: Sanctions as a Means of Coercion**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sanctions are defined as deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations. A sanction is a restriction imposed by one or more states upon another state in order to force that state to comply with legal obligations. President Woodrow Wilson in 1919 famously remarked: “A nation that is boycotted is a nation that is in sight of surrender. Apply this economic, peaceful, silent, deadly remedy and there will be no need for force. It does not cost a life outside the nation boycotted, but it brings a pressure upon the nation, which, in my judgment, no modern nation could resist.”

President Wilson’s sentiment was shared by many and the opinion that sanctions provide a more effective and less costly means of coercion than military force has become increasingly popular. The use of sanctions has increased dramatically in recent years proven by the fact that more sanctions were imposed in the 1990s than at any other time in the twentieth century. The objectives of particular sanctions vary, however the primary intention usually involves a desire either to reverse territorial aggression, to deter and punish terrorism, to enforce disarmament, or to promote human rights. Many countries, including the United States, are large proponents of the use of sanctions. In 1998, President Clinton admitted that the U.S. government had become “sanctions happy,” having signed new punitive measures against India, Pakistan, Cuba, Iran and Libya during his time in office. U.S. sanctions now target 26 countries, accounting for over half of the world’s population.

While the issuance of sanctions has increased dramatically, the effectiveness of these measures has come under harsh scrutiny in recent years. It is widely accepted that sanctions are aimed at those in power in order to coerce the government under sanctions to reform itself according to the directives of the imposing state. A closer examination of the effects of sanctions leaves many critics wondering if the restrictions are in fact serving this purpose. The effects of sanctions on innocent civilians are becoming more visible and the international community is now asking that the sanctions be reevaluated.



The case of Iraq is one example of a UN sanction that many have said has failed. The embargo against Iraq was implemented in 1990 after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and the post-war discovery of an extensive Iraqi program designed to produce weapons of mass destruction. The sanctions included comprehensive trade and financial restrictions, but allowed for limited oil sales under the United Nations oil-for-food program. In the case of Iraq, humanitarian food and medical supplies are items that were exempt from the embargo. However according to many scholars, Iraq is unable to import medicine and hospital equipment without export earnings. Shortages of food and proper health care equipment are unintended and devastating effects of the UN sanctions. By dismantling the normal functioning of the Iraqi economy, the general population has been subjected to the most destructive effects of the sanctions.

Sanctions are not only costly to the country under restrictions, but also to those countries applying them. Economic sanctions, while intended to punish uncooperative nations, cost the United States between \$15 billion and \$19 billion annually in potential export revenue. Furthermore, the imposition of sanctions internationally has resulted in the loss of more than 200,000 American jobs in the relatively higher-wage export sector. In addition, other countries that are unaffiliated with the sanctions suffer spillover economic consequences as they come under pressure from the industrialized countries to suspend relations with the countries being sanctioned.

Sanctions have been marginally effective in initiating political reform in isolationist or authoritarian regimes. The obvious example of a UN sanction that has failed to bring about political reform is again the case of Iraq. Through deliberately trying to isolate Iraq in order to remove Saddam Hussein from power, the UN sanctions have impoverished that country with no improvement in the political leadership. Moreover, when sanctions are imposed against weak democracies, such as Pakistan, they have the potential to upset the government structure and indirectly contribute to the replacement of the existing government by an authoritarian system that cares much less about foreign pressure. In October 1999, Gen. Pervez Musharraf seized power from the Pakistani civilian government. While U.S. and G-8 imposed sanctions are not directly responsible for the military takeover, the sanctions have created the impoverishment of many Pakistanis who, in turn, faulted the government for their situation.

In several instances, internationally imposed sanctions have precipitated internal acts of aggression. It has been proposed that the sanctions imposed against Panama, Haiti, Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia set the stage for unrest and conflict in these countries. Sanctions have the ability to aggravate a nation in more economically strangling and psychologically intimidating ways than even military force. While sanctions are viewed by many to be a more diplomatic and humane approach for responding to international crises, they can be as debilitating and destructive as military action. Many scholars believe sanctions to be three-quarters of the way towards the use of force.



## History of the Problem

Since the sanctions on Iraq have been met with the most criticism, we will investigate this Security Council resolution in greater detail than perhaps some of the other sanctions (but we will also largely leave the specifics of our discussion up to you delegates). To continue with the example of Iraq, in 1990 Iraq was brought to the forefront of the news after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The United Nations imposed a trade embargo designed to force Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait. It was assumed by the Security Council, and much of the world, that Saddam would be forced to retreat or risk the impoverishment of his country. An American-led coalition of troops eventually forced Saddam's soldiers out of Kuwait. The sanctions remained however, as it became known that Saddam was housing weapons of mass destruction or at least was in the process of building them. The terms of the UN sanctions held that the embargo would be lifted once Saddam destroyed his arsenal and complied with the United Nations to allow access to his biological warfare plants. Saddam has thus far refused to cooperate with the UN inspectors, preventing them full access to his biological weapons program. The United States and Great Britain bombed Baghdad and other sites in 1998 in an attempt to force Saddam's compliance with the UN inspectors. Unfortunately, Saddam still refuses to readmit the UN inspectors or make any concessions on the biological weapons.

The embargo of 1990 prohibited all trade with Iraq and froze Iraqi assets overseas. According to the IMF, by 1991 Iraq's economy had already been reduced by nearly two-thirds of its pre-embargo size. That figure, however, does not accurately illustrate the totality of devastation facing Iraq today. Every sector of the Iraqi economy depends to some extent on imports. Factories and Iraqi-made goods are dependent on parts from abroad. Businesses have been shut down, and inflation has made the salaries of those who have been able to keep their jobs virtually meaningless. The most tragic development since the sanctions were imposed has been the dramatic reduction of health care services. A recent UNICEF report estimated that from the period between 1991 and 1998, some 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five have died as a result of the Gulf War and the sanctions following.

The Iraqi example has led many critics and NGOs to condemn the use of sanctions because of the collateral damage that is indirectly but harshly imposed on the general population of sanctioned countries. But do all sanctions lead to humanitarian disasters as in the case of Iraq? In Cambodia, at least in a limited fashion, sanctions contributed to the successful isolation of the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, the most frequently used sanctions in the 1990's were arms embargoes, imposed against Angola, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Liberia, and Rwanda. These sanctions did not have a crippling effect on the populations of these countries. Unfortunately, these sanctions are considered by many to be the least effective in bringing about political compliance. In Angola, for example, sanctions twice strengthened by the Security Council against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) faction, failed to constrain their military capability or prevent continued warfare. Some scholars have even found



the Iraqi sanctions to be moderately successful; the military was largely ruined and most weapons of mass destruction in Iraq have been destroyed (hopefully). However, one of the main objectives of the sanctions, the removal and replacement of Saddam Hussein, is yet to be accomplished.

## **Bloc Positions**

The standard blocs that exist in the General Assembly and the other committees do not exist in the Security Council and countries tend to act in their individual capacity. However, there are still shared opinions between the members and those states not on the Security Council according to the geographical position of the Security Council members, their most important allies, as well as their economic interests. For example, China and Russia tend to vote similarly and share the same position on many agenda items. The U.S. and U.K. tend to be in agreement on most Security Council topics as well. France was designed to be a moderating voice at the conception of the United Nations, and they continue to maintain this role in many respects. Ukraine often aligns itself with Russia, as Canada does with its neighbor, the United States. The Netherlands tends to have a more relaxed position than France does. Trinidad, Jamaica, Argentina, and even Malaysia to some degree all have similar interests on the Security Council, while Bangladesh, Mali, and Namibia in many respects naturally form a third-world bloc.

## **Past UN Action**

In the first forty-five years of existence, the UN ordered the use of sanctions on only two occasions: against Rhodesia in 1966 and South Africa in 1977. In the past ten years, however, the Security Council has imposed twelve comprehensive or partial sanctions against the following countries: Iraq in 1990; the former Yugoslavia in 1991; Libya, Liberia, and Somalia in 1992; Haiti and the UNITA faction of Angola in 1993; Rwanda in 1994; Sudan in 1996; Sierra Leone in 1997; the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1998; Afghanistan in 1999; and Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2000. Sanctions against Haiti, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and the 1991 sanctions against the former Yugoslavia have since been lifted, and those against Libya have been suspended. In addition to these UN Security Council sanctions, member states have imposed their own bilateral, multilateral, or regional sanctions more than three dozen times during the 1990s.

## **Proposed Solutions**

While we have outlined some of the deficiencies of UN sanctions, few scholars would denounce sanctions as a means of preventing conflict and promoting policy change entirely. The greatest challenge for the UN Security Council is to design and carry out the sanctions in such a way that the impact that is focused on the leaders, political elite, and others responsible for the objectionable behavior, is felt by those targeted. Moreover, the most delicate task for the UN



Security Council is to reduce the collateral damage of the sanctions on the general population of the sanctioned country and to limit the impact on neighboring or friendly third parties. The challenges faced by the Security Council are critical as they can put the people of entire countries in jeopardy. There is hope yet however. The world at large is counting on us to find solutions and improvements to the existing sanctions as well as a sound framework for the future use of sanctions. We cannot afford to fail.

## Conclusion

Both Jasmine and I are extremely excited for the conference. Let me reiterate once more that we are both available and eager to hear from all of you if anything comes up that you would like clarification on or just want to discuss the conference. We can be reached by the following ways:

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Below are some websites that might be helpful for your research:

UN Security Council Homepage  
[www.un.org/Overview/Organs/sc.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/Organs/sc.html)

UN Security Council Rules of Procedure  
[www.un.org/Docs/sc/scrules.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/scrules.htm)

UNA-USA Security Council Homepage  
[www.unausa.org/publications/seccouncil.htm](http://www.unausa.org/publications/seccouncil.htm)

Global Policy Forum Homepage  
[www.globalpolicy.org](http://www.globalpolicy.org)